

## GRIST MILLS

Milling was one of the first industries in the Midway area, having its beginning in 1861 when John H. Van Wagoner built the first mill on the old Wood's Farm, known as the Fred Price home site.

The enterprising Mr. Van Wagoner had only been in Midway for about a year when he sensed the need of the people for a mill. He brought the first mill stone to the town by ox team and shaped the stone with hammer and chisel.

Sidney Epperson records in his journal the delight of the people with Mr. Van Wagoner's mill. After stating that the people could now have flour ground, and grain prepared for their cattle, Mr. Epperson wrote "This mill was indeed a blessing for the settlers."

In recent years the stone from this first mill has been placed atop a monument on the Post Office corner by the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers.

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Early millers of Midway included George Bonner, James Ross, Mr. Saxey, Brigham Mulliner, Hyrum Horner Dennis, Mark Jeffs and Mr. John Van Wagoner.

The major mill in Midway had its beginnings in 1893 when Mark Jeffs built a large, four-story grist mill on the east side of Midway near the Provo River. This mill was capable of producing 50 barrels of flour every 24 hours. Water from Provo River powered the mill, which was the first roller mill in the county. An additional source of water was the Birkumshaw Springs, about a mile and a half above the mill. Water was stored in a large pond overnight and then used as desired during the day.

Because Mr. Jeffs hired transient millers to operate his mill, the venture failed to succeed and was closed in 1900.

However, Nels Joseph Johnson, a young miller, and native of Wasatch County, purchased the mill in 1903 and started operating it again. Mr. Johnson had been working for Abram Hatch in the Heber Flour Mills, but moved his wife and family to Midway as soon as he purchased the mill. He is reported to have paid Mr. Jeffs \$10,000 for the facility.

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Through the years the mill has been successfully managed by Mr. Johnson and his sons. During World War I it ran at full capacity producing flour for the government. Most of this production was shipped to Houston, Texas. Flour was also shipped to San Francisco during the tragic earthquake of 1906.

Improvements made at the mill during the years included cleaning machines for the wheat, chopping facilities and flour bleaching equipment. Hundreds of tons of wheat were also stored in the mill.

For many years the mill was operated under the name of Peoples Roller Mills, and then later the Johnson Milling Company. When Mr. Johnson died in 1950, his son, Ralph J. Johnson took over the management. The mill is now the property of the Lifferth Manufacturing Co. It is under the management of Henry Lifferth. The company makes small metal tools.

*Ralph Johnson*

*Reid & Lala Bodine*

*↓  
5 Several People (Alys) from SL*

*See under  
wasatch skins*

*add LBNH  
PP 541-2-3*

*for 2 yrs then  
sold machinery*